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Chamber Music and Camera Trio: Samuel Beckett's Second Television Play

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> *Beyond that black beyond. Ghost light. Ghost night. Ghost rooms [...]. Stands there staring beyond at that black veil lips quivering to half-heard words. Trying of other matters. Trying to treat of other matters. Till half hears there are no other matters*.
> (Samuel Beckett, *A Piece of Monologue*)

Beckett and chamber music

Beckett's love of music, his ability as a pianist, his preference for the classics and the romantics (Beethoven and Schubert especially), his aversion to opera and Wagner's or Mahler's works, his appreciation of only a few modern composers, his friendly relations with some important musicians, and his pleasure in attending concerts are all documented in James Knowlson's *Damned to Fame* (1996 [1997]), which has significantly contributed to a new field of investigation in Beckettian studies. Although the credit for editing the first full-length work to deal exclusively with Beckett and music goes to Mary Bryden (1998), there is no doubt about the importance of Knowlson's biography for this and other new fields of Beckettian studies[1]. And indeed from it we learn that

[1] As H. Porter Abbott acknowledges in his contribution to *Samuel Beckett and the Arts. Music, Visual Arts, and Non-Print Media*, "James Knowlson's new biography brings well into light what we knew, but never knew quite so well" (Oppenheim 1999, p. 7).

Beckett's interest for chamber music dates back to the difficult years he spent in London in the Thirties, "obsessed with his mental and physical disarray" and yet in some way able to come to terms with it, thanks to Hester Dowden who "was partly responsible for the comparative richness of his musical life at this time" (p. 191). They played piano duets on her Steinway; she "was well informed about the concerts that were worth attending in London, and used to hold her own musical entertainments [...] for friends and guests at her Sunday soirées" (pp. 191-192), a number of which were attended by Beckett.

When, in his later career, Beckett uses music in his plays, he opts for instrumental music and a similar preference inspires his authorization of the musical settings for his plays or excerpts. Between 1976 and 1977, the years when Beckett composes and directs or supervises the rehearsals of "Ghost Trio", "at least six different musical settings or operas were approved" (p. 655), and while his preference for instrumental music is often stated in his letters, those years also indicate a period of deep involvement in music and its relation to his work.

In this light, the choice of Beethoven's Piano Trio N. 5 in D Major, op. 70 n 1 for his second television play is not surprising and it also seems evident that chamber music suits Beckett's work better than orchestral music. "Minimalism", his "late style in the theatre", to borrow the title of one of Enoch Brater's books (1987), shares with chamber music an aesthetics which leaves out what is not essential and exploits the few elements left, thus limiting form itself on one side, and exploring the possibilities of what is left on the other. The term "chamber music" originally referred to music not to be performed in public places and this original reference not only seems apt to the small playhouse as the best place for Beckett's late theatre in general; it also indicates, in the case of "Ghost Trio", the setting: the protagonist, Male Figure (F), listens to Beethoven's music in a chamber, "the familiar chamber", we are told by Voice (V), the only other character listed by Beckett at the beginning of the published text[2]. However,

[2] On the different versions of the published text see Gontarski (1985, p. 125).

having lost this original reference, the term nowadays "excludes, on the one side, solo vocal music and music for a single instrument (or for a solo instrument accompanied by another) and, on the other, orchestral and choral music"; it "includes merely instrumental music for 2, 3, 4, or more instruments, played with a single instrument to 'a part', all parts being on equal terms" (Kennedy 1980, p. 124.) This definition sheds light on one of the main characteristics of "Ghost Trio": like the piano, the violin and the cello of Beethoven's Trio, the few elements or instruments used by Beckett succeed in conveying a great dramatic and lyrical impact because each of them plays its own part on equal terms and in combination with the others and none of them has a secondary role or the mere function of accompanying. The Italian equivalent of "chamber music" is *musica da camera*; accordingly, "Ghost Trio" can be called a "camera play".

Beckett's and Beethoven's Trios

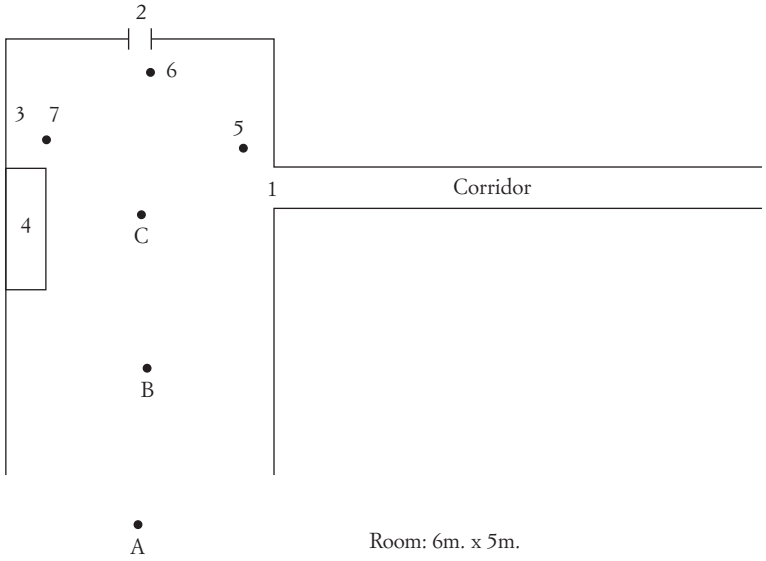
Beckett's Trio is divided into three parts which, solely in the written text, are respectively titled "I Pre-action", "II Action" and "III Re-action"[3], and are in turn divided into progressively numbered segments, containing either directions for the camera, F's actions, and the intervention of music and sound effects, or Voice's lines, with related captions[4]. Each section exploits different types of shots and has one sequence in which the camera moves towards F from the long distance view to the close up and backward; the three acoustic elements never "play" together; music enters the action nine times; sound effects are present only in the third part; Voice is found only in the first two parts, while F is always on stage, has no lines and does not move in Pre-action. Beckett illustrates the set and the positions of camera and F in the first page of the printed text:

[3] The tripartite structure of the play and the three positions of the camera and of F have attracted much attention; critics have also detected many other trios, see: Knowlson 1986, Calder 1977, Brater 1987, Deleuze 1992.

[4] From now onwards my reference to the play will be given in parenthesis, where Roman numbers indicate its parts and Arabic numbers their respective segments.

FEMALE VOICE (V)
MALE FIGURE (F)

I Pre-action
II Action
III Re-action



Room: 6m. x 5m.

1 Door.
2 Window.
3 Mirror.
4 Pallet.
5 F seated by door.
6 F at window.
7 F at head of pallet.
A Position general view.
B Position medium shot.
C Position near shot of 5 and 1, 6 and 2, 7 and 3.

F is in the room, seated on a stool (5), bent over an object that he is holding in his lap; every little while he gets up to go to the window (2) or to the door (1) or towards the bed (4) or the mirror (3) and then regains his position. The object will be gradually revealed as a recorder, which the music – entering the action nine times – comes from.

Following Linda Ben-Zvi's (1985) complaint about the critical neglect of Samuel Beckett's radio and television works, the second

TV play has been widely described, analyzed and interpreted; even so, Maier (2001 and 2002) is right in pointing out that when the first part of his long essay was published (2001) the role of Beethoven's Trio in the play had still not attracted sufficient attention[5].

The nine musical abstracts are all taken from the second movement, the *Largo assai ed espressivo*, and it has been recently argued that Beckett's tripartite structure reiterates that of Beethoven's Trio (Herren 2001), that in the composition process and in the German production the author/director "endeavoured to make [the] intensifying structure [of the *Largo*] effective in his play" (Maier 2001, p. 276), and that he "uses" Beethoven's "expressivity and [...] formal symmetries [...] in order to undermine their stability as their constructedness is revealed" (Laws 2003, p. 202).

In his comprehensive discussion of the two trios, Maier points out that the *Largo* "has a clear binary form", divided as it is "into two parts and a coda that is intended as the final climax" (2001, p. 268 and 2002, p. 319); he notes further that "the inner structure of the [...] two main parts is also binary" (2001, p. 269), as it is composed of two musical subjects. His and Laws' detailed examinations of Beckett's use of the *Largo* show that all the abstracts, except the last, are taken from the bars containing the first subject, and that the second, the *cantabile*, appears only in the last excerpt when the full coda is heard at the end of "Re-action". In spite of this, none of them gives this repetition the prominence it deserves in the formal patterning of "Ghost Trio", whereas I believe that it indicates that Beckett's main criterion for the choice of the musical excerpts was to preserve and reproduce the repetitive character of the second movement of Beethoven's Trio as a reflection of how repetition rules in his own Trio.

Maier proves that Beckett decided to include the coda very late in the composition process, and that in the German production the author/director opted for cutting the first two musical excerpts and using the second subject *also* at the end of the second part of the play, "Action". Since Maier bases his analysis on the German

[5] One exception is the chapter on "Ghost Trio" in *A Student's Guide to the Plays of Samuel Beckett* (Fletcher, Fletcher, Smith and Bachem 1978): in spite of its brevity and already in 1978 it analyzes each of Beckett's musical excerpts and draws attention to Beckett's use of *one* particular motif of Beethoven's Trio.

production of *Geister Trio*, the importance he attaches to Beckett's new decision is understandable and his explanation equally plausible[6]. However, his reading is not applicable to the British versions of "Ghost Trio" – in which the cantabile appears *only* at the end of "Re-action" – whereas repetition still plays a fundamental role in the German text. Beckett does counteract the introduction of the second subject in the middle of *Geister Trio*, as he reinforces the repetition of the first subject in two ways: first, the new musical excerpt is the briefest and is briefer than its corresponding excerpt in the BBC production; second, the length of all the excerpts containing the first subject is significantly increased. I should also specify that the first two excerpts missing in the Stuttgart production lasted barely one bar each in the BBC edition.

Stressing the repetitive aspect of the excerpts takes into account the difficulty critics have in assigning a superior textual authority to any of the different versions of Beckett's texts[7]. The preservation and reproduction of the repetition of Beethoven's *Largo* is a prominent feature of "Ghost Trio", be it the printed version, the BBC edition or the Stuttgart production. Besides, it is matched by the repetitions of Voice. At the beginning, through them, the play seems to corroborate the epistemological and metaphysical system "which makes 'I see' synonymous with 'I understand'. Knowledge, comprehension, reason, are established through the power of the *look*, through the '*eye*' and the '*I*' of the human subject whose relation to objects is structured through his field of vision" (Jackson 2000, p. 45):

> Good evening. Mine is a faint voice. Kindly tune accordingly. [*Pause*.] Good evening. Mine is a faint voice. Kindly tune accordingly. [*Pause*.] It will not be raised, nor lowered, whatever happens. [*Pause*.] Look. [*Long Pause*.] The familiar chamber. [*Pause*.] At the far end a window. [*Pause*.] On the right the indispensable door. [*Pause*.] On the left, against the wall, some kind of pallet. [*Pause*.] The light: faint, omnipresent. No visible source. As if all luminous. Faintly luminous. No shadow. [*Pause*.] No shadow. Colour: none. All grey. Shades of grey. [*Pause*.] The colour grey if you wish, shades of the colour grey. [*Pause*.] Forgive my stating the obvious. [*Pause*.] Keep that sound down. [*Pause*]. Now look closer. [*Pause.*] Floor.
>
> (I. 2)

This last word is followed immediately by a cut and a close-up of the floor; similarly, throughout the entire duration of "Pre-action", Voice literally guides the spectator's gaze and comprehension, as each new shot is accompanied by the announcement of the object being shot and by the invitation to "now look closer" and "look again". V's lines are ambivalent and may refer both to the camera – which alternates close ups and general views – and to the spectator, who in turn must look "closer" and "again" at the announced object; V thus describes the way the spectacle works and gives the audience an awareness of how gaze and shot coincide. The television play comments and observes itself, and calls on the spectator to think about the intrinsic illusion of the form itself.

A similar ambivalence and function can be found in "Action", in which the voice seems to foresee the actions of the character. The various phrases, "Now to door" (II. 7 and 24), "Now to window" (II. 13), "Now to pallet" (II. 19), sound as predictions/descriptions of F's actions, as stage directions guiding such actions, and as guides to the spectator's gaze[8]. Despite this, Voice does not assume any guiding function in relation to the music; moreover, the whole epistemological notion of knowledge based on the centrality of the Subject and gaze begins to fall into crisis, when music enters the play for the first time (I. 13)[9]. This happens

[6] The introduction of the second subject of the *Largo* in the middle of the play "is to be explained not only by its foreshadowing function [i.e. of the final image and excerpt of the play], but also by [...] the cantabile's audible condensation [that] corresponds to the contracted action at this moment of the play" (Maier 2002, p. 317).

[7] On this problem, raised by Beckett's bilingualism and self-translations, see: Friedman, Rossman and Sherzer 1987, Beer 1994, Gordon 1996 and Fusella 2002.

[8] These functions of the camera have been commented upon by many critics; see, particularly: Knowlson 1986, Brater 1987, Védrenne 2001 and Herren 2007. The alternating general views and close-ups have been called by Jonathan Kalb "the model of the double-take – [...] another example of Beckett incorporating the viewer's process of viewing into his drama" (Kalb 1994, p. 140); Peter Gidal points out that they aim at "*making difficult* a 'natural viewing'" (Gidal 1979, p. 54).

[9] In the German production, given the cut of the first two musical excerpts, music will be heard for the first time during the sequence in which the camera

immediately after the camera repeats for the second time the same shooting of the floor (I. 9): two close-ups in succession project identical images, but Voice identifies them as the "wall" (I. 6) and "floor" (I. 8) of the familiar chamber.

Camera Trio: F, camera and music

The reduction of the role of V as facilitator in the visual field and in the spectator's comprehension coincides, then, with the first musical excerpt and the moment in which repetition enters in the play and starts to rule it. Beckett's continual offering and re-offering the audience images, objects, shots, F's actions, and music interventions shows a skilful use of repetition, employing its signifying power yet showing the limits and revealing the process of signification itself. He thus expresses a strong sense of disorientation and uncertainty which makes the spectator constantly suspended between seeing a sense and loosing it, even as he ensures that there is a minimal dramatic action, without which incommunicability would take over.

The action is simple: F waits for a "she" (a woman, Death, the ghost of a dead woman – we do not know) and fills the wait by listening to a piece of chamber music from the recorder he has on his lap. Every little while he moves his head suddenly because, as V announces, "He will now think he hears her" (II. 1). He goes to the door or the window to check; in one case only (III. 30-32) some steps are heard, then a boy knocks on the door and shakes his head ambiguously; F goes back to his seated position and the play ends.

There is no doubt that F is waiting for "her", because the audience is told this by Voice and because Beckett's working title, *Tryst*, that was substituted at a very late stage of the composition (see Bryden, Garforth and Mills 1998, pp. 44-46) confirms this. However, no general agreement has been reached on the rest of the action. Undoubtedly, the feeling of incomprehension and the ghostly atmosphere one experiences during the performance, or imagines when reading the text as a script, may result in attaching less importance to the dramatic action itself and in greater difficulty in reconstructing it. And interpretation may depend on the version of the play: those who work with the German production can easily prove that F is listening to the music, as there F actually presses the buttons of the recorder; others may question the relation between F and the music. In both videos there are shots where F places something on the stool as soon as he gets up, or alternatively picks something up from it before sitting, and as many near shots and one close-up of the stool. However, even if the printed text specifies that this "something" is the recorder, these shots are not sufficient, on their own, unequivocally to explain the action[10].

I suggest that the effect depends on Beckett's exploitation of the characteristics of repetition, as theorized by philosophers such as Derrida and Deleuze. The turning point of their thought lies in the superseding of the representational system which states the existence of an original and a copy, the former independent of the latter and the latter dependent on the former; in such a system, repetition depends on something that already exists by definition, that is autonomous and always stays the same. Instead, in the absence of any hierarchy between original and repetition and given their mutual dependence, the role played by difference is given prominence: in order to be caught as such, repetition must necessarily be different, if only minimally, from what it repeats[11]. Deleuze emphasizes that pure or exact repetition does not exist and that difference constitutes repetition**:**

> It is always *in one and the same movement that repetition includes difference* (not as an accidental and extrinsic variant but at its heart, as the essential variant of which it is composed, the displacement and disguise which constitute it as a difference that is itself divergent and displaced) [...].
>
> (Deleuze 1968 [1994, p. 289])

moves towards F seated on the stool (from A, via B and C, to the close-up), and backwards (I. 31, 35).

[10] Among the critics who raise a doubt about F's relation to music, see Fletcher, Fletcher, Smith and Bachem 1978, Worth 1986 and 1999 [2001], and Laws 2003. They all affirm that there is no clear indication in the text that F "hears" the music or "listens" to it.

[11] I am referring in particular to Deleuze 1968, Derrida 1967, and Steven Connor's excellent first chapter of his *Samuel Beckett. Repetition, Theory and Text* (1988, pp. 1-14).

The scenes in which music is present show how Beckett is careful to make the repetition and the original mutually essential, emblematizing the absence of a hierarchy among the three parts of the play, which in turn iterate and re-iterate their own components[12].

The first two musical excerpts are heard during two close-ups of the door in Pre-action; the others while the protagonist is filmed sitting, bent over, on the stool. In the seven times in which this is repeated, the scene is the same but what the spectator sees and hears is different because Beckett uses at least three variables: 1) the camera position and the type of shot, 2) the volume of Music and 3) what precedes the scene, for instance, if F is already sitting or sits down. In this way he reveals the sense of F's image on the stool, only gradually hiding or disclosing its aspects; although the image is always unchanged, in the repetitions it is never the same and is included in a chain of cross-references of its repetitions and the repetitions of its components in other scenes, including those where Music is not present.

It is not possible, here, to go over this game thoroughly, but the comparison between similarities and differences of the various repetitions allows for the following conclusion: music is *never* present in the play when F is moving or moves his head as he thinks he hears her and is *always* present when he is bent over on his stool. When the spectator of this process is able to understand that music is *only* present when F is seated and does not move at all, the dramatic action can be reconstructed and the images already repeated reveal elements that, without repetition, would not be discovered. As Deleuze confirms:

> What is displaced and disguised in the series [...] exists and acts as the differenciator of difference. [...] each series is explicated and unfolded only in implicating the others, it therefore repeats the others and is repeated in the others, which in turn implicate it [...] with the result that it returns to itself as many times as it returns to another.
> (Deleuze 1968 [1994, pp. 299-300])

[12] The absence of a hierarchy is such that none of the three parts is assigned the role of pre-existing identity. Notwithstanding the title, "Action" does not convey the dramatic action and, although it is positioned between the other two parts, it is not *the centre* of the work, it does not have a privileged function from which to look at the other parts as *marginal*; on their part, the prefixes of the other two titles do not indicate so much a *preparation* or a *repetition of the action*, than they actually refer to the literal meaning and the Latin etymology, mainly recalling the concepts of "in front of" and "behind/against", rather than those of "before/preceding" and "again".

Thus, for instance, one discovers that the first two musical excerpts, previously perceived as mere incidental music, are actually tied to the fact that, in order to shoot the close-ups of the door, the camera necessarily has to move in front of it and, therefore, close to F who sits on his stool near the door. These new elements – the door is close to the music source, the stool is close to the door and F sits near it – are thus added to the only thing the spectator knows before the effect of repetition and difference, i.e. that the "indispensable door", as Voice asserts, is "on the right" of the familiar chamber. By playing with his few instruments and visually repeating the structure of repetition with alterations of Beethoven's Piano Trio Beckett reveals a *ghost* of dramatic action**.**

Defamiliarization and unheimlich

The use Beckett makes of repetition is also the main device for producing the disorienting effect that is such a fundamental trait of the spectator's fruition and reaction, whether or not the dramatic action is grasped. After Voice's first long line, concomitant with the long shot of the room from A, "Pre-action" alternates close-ups of the elements that compose the room with general views from A. This way, the spectator sees the "familiar chamber", the floor, the wall, the door, the bed and the window over and over again, inside a repetitive structure in which three shots from A introduce and conclude two series of close-ups. With the succession of these close-ups, the spectator, called upon by Voice to look closer and more carefully, sees ten grey rectangles which progressively remove the filmed objects from their referents, in a growing confusion which makes them more and more indistinct[13].

[13] The many essays that deal with this effect rightly point out the ways in which Beckett creates it: the directions provided in the script indicate the size of the rectangles (seventy centimetres wide, and either two, or one and a half metres tall), their colour (grey), opaque glass for the window and no knobs for the door and the window.

The repetition of these rectangles, all located inside the rectangular shaped room and "subsumed in the rectangle of the television screen" (Ben-Zvi 1985, p. 35), has a stunning impact on the audience, and most critics stress that their effect is to defamiliarize, fragment, estrange, or explode "the familiar room" and the objects, to give them an aesthetic quality that distances them from their own common use, to exhaust the potentialities of space, and to make a 'natural viewing' difficult (see respectively: Herren 1998, p. 78; Védrenne 2001, p. 333; Herren 2007, p. 75; Ben-Zvi 1985, p. 36; Wulf 1994, p. 59; Deleuze 1992, p. 85, and Gidal 1979, p. 54). These identical images appear to the spectator's gaze as undifferentiated and undistinguishable shapes, having reference only because Voice names them; this "naming", however, reveals its very own arbitrariness. The alternating close-ups and general views, and their repetition, set the spectator before difference, not ruled by pre-existing categories of representation, invisible yet irreducible: the arbitrary character of the sign, the fundamental element of representation, comes thus to the fore.

Linda Ben-Zvi, Catherine Laws, James Knowlson, Eric Prieto, to quote only some, have read the play and come to similar conclusions. Knowlson's reading of the sequence of the rectangles is: "There is, in other words, a deliberate play on the disparity between 'looking' and 'knowing' that leaves the spectator aware of the strangeness and the ambiguity of what he is observing, intrigued and disturbed rather than reassured by the speaker's [Voice's] words" (Knowlson 1986, p. 198). Similarly, Linda Ben-Zvi comments that "[by] revealing the conventions of sound and shape, Beckett clears the way for their use in a form that takes as its subject the limitations of sound and sight in perceiving the world" (Ben-Zvi 1985, p. 36). Eric Prieto, who reads "Ghost Trio" with reference to Plato's cave allegory, says: "Beckett's genius lies in his ability to work skilfully with our yearning for meaning, always inciting us to search further [...], but without ever allowing us to come to a point where we feel that the work of interpretation has been completed" (Prieto 2002, p. 212). Catherine Laws, whose essay explores the ways in which Beckett's musical excerpts match the ambiguities of the relationship between body, voice, and viewer, concludes: "the relationship between voice and action, the treatment of the body, the process of representation, and the use of

music all imply that the voiceless F is neither full selfhood nor 'unself' [...], and that what we experience is a groping towards the 'unsayability' of this state" (Laws 2003, p. 211).

The issues raised, then, are those of the subject, interpretation, knowledge, perception and the interrogation of their limits and ambiguities; I suggest that the spectator's disorientation in front of the alternating rectangles and general views derives also from facing the touching of difference and resemblance on a border where one spills over into the other, and perhaps, even more so, from regaining, if only for brief instants, flashes of her/his pre-symbolic Self. The rectangles produce an uncanny effect and recall those indistinct and nameless shapes that objects must appear to be before our entrance into the Symbolic.

Freud explains that *unheimlich* has two meanings: one deriving from the opposite of "familiar", and the other from the opposite of "secret" and "hidden"; therefore, he relates the uncanny to "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud 1919 [1955, p. 220]), but which "has become alienated from [the mind] through the process of repression" (p. 241). The uncanny effect of the rectangles, then, could derive from the disclosure, in flashes, of the secret upon which our symbolic order is built, revealing, in other words, our pre-symbolic relation to the world, from a time when a fluid and undifferentiated reality was familiar to us; that very relationship we have all had to abandon and remove in order to construct ourselves as subjects, and to represent the world in our eyes, in other words, to adapt to the reality principle[14]. Through the intervention of the rectangles the "familiar chamber" is not only "defamiliarized", but it also becomes *unheimlich*, thus fore-

[14] Also Catharina Wulf (1994) draws on Freud for her reading of "Ghost Trio". She identifies the musical excerpts with Freud's *fort/da*, Lacan's *object petit a*, and Winnicott's "transitional object" in order to prove that F plays the music "to overcome the loss of the other [the woman he is waiting for]" (Wulf 1994, p. 60), and concludes that at the end of the play F "understands that he will stay by himself. [... He] has finally outgrown his need for the transitional object [...and is] no longer overcome by the eternally lacking object" (p. 61). Personally I find unconvincing all readings of "Ghost Trio" that detect a development in F's situation; even F's final smile (in the German production) is ambiguous and does not allow for any denouement.

shadowing the effect brought about throughout the entire play by repetition.

Consolation and deconstruction

Suspending the audience between sense and nonsense, resemblance and difference, recognition and misrecognition of what it sees, has seen and sees again, of what pre-exists and re-exists, repetition imposes a double and opposite solicitation: the effort to see, to see more and to understand, and the desire to lapse into the absence of sense and into the music; then again the attempt at seeing and understanding, solicited by the interruption of the music. The interval between all these oscillations, through continuous repetition, produces that feeling of suspension and that uncanny effect that appear to me as the most effective elements of "Ghost Trio".

Catherine Laws asserts that "Despite the emphasis on both the bareness of this play and its ambiguities" critics frequently identify music as "an element of expressiveness or consolation" (Laws 2003, p. 200)[15]. Given the continuous interruption, which makes the excerpts very brief and frustrates F's and the audience's desire for more music, I think she is certainly right in confuting any reading of "Ghost Trio" "as offering a positive assertion of the triumph of humanity through the spirit of the music" (p. 211). Furthermore, it seems to me that the emphasis I have put on the role of music in conveying the suspension effect matches her idea that music is part of the subversive resistance she detects at the heart of "Ghost Trio". She argues that Beckett deconstructs Beethoven's expressivity and formal symmetries and concludes that "Beckett specifically draws upon the spirit of German Romanticism which infuses the music, but does so precisely in order to deconstruct these ideas and put into question the possibility of simple solace or absolute redemption" (p. 202). However, it also seems to me that, to some extent, Laws underrates the role of music in "Ghost Trio". She concludes that "there is nothing to confirm whether or not he [F] is actually 'listening' to it on the cassette" (p. 208), and she does not

[15] Laws detects this consolatory role of music in the essays by Anna McMullan (1997), Phil Baker (1995-1996), Sydney Homan (1992) and Graley Herren (1998 and 2001).

follow the implications of the last, uninterrupted, musical excerpt for the reaction of the audience.

I hope I have demonstrated that, on one hand, music contributes to the play of repetition and interruption that conveys the suspension effect, and, on the other, that F does listen to the music from his recorder, and that Beckett opposes music to Voice and to the binary gaze/knowledge. This opposition, while frustrating the desire to hear more music, renovates it at intervals and is mirrored by F's filling his wait with music and interrupting it by going to check if "she" is coming. On these grounds I believe that the play conveys *also* the feeling – rather than the idea – that music might bring some solace. Herren's statement that "Beckett remembers Beethoven by dismembering his work" (Herren 2007, p. 79) is apposite to what I believe is the audience's final reaction.

With the last musical excerpt, the only one that is played uninterrupted till Beethoven's *Largo* ends, and with the silence of the last two shots which must take up 15 seconds and fade out, I believe the audience seeks for more silence or different sounds than those produced by words. In these other sounds the spectator finds her/himself thinking like the character of *The Unnamable*:

> I who am on my way, words bellying out my sails, am also that unthinkable ancestor of whom nothing can be said. But perhaps I shall speak of him some day, and of the impenetrable age when I was he, some day when they fall silent, convinced at last I shall never get born, having failed to be conceived
> (*The Unnamable*, p. 324)

Then without the solace of music the audience will finish the Unnamable's meditation, in silence:

> Yes, perhaps I shall speak of him, for an instant, like an echo that mocks, before being restored to him, the one they could not part me from.
> (p. 324)

Beckett's moral and intellectual integrity makes the audience of "Ghost Trio" remember, invoke and evoke the unthinkable ancestor and at the same time dismember him in the attempt to find a way to express him. Any language, any art form belonging to the

humanist tradition, while trying to express the unthinkable ancestor, has contributed to postulate him; he is "unthinkable" precisely because there is nothing to express. The contemporary artist and his/her audience finally know and feel that any attempt to express him can only be an act of mimicry, one that while echoing him, also mocks him. Nevertheless, while denouncing that the unthinkable ancestor is yet another human construction, "Ghost Trio" postulates him once again, as

...perhaps ... "...at this place, at this moment of time..." *... still ...* "...personally needed"...[16]

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